

## Evolutionary Parenting 'Back to Basics' Email Course

## Homework Chart: Setting Expectations

Please write down below what your current expectations are for your child's sleep:

Now please complete the following chart to see how your individual child fits with the known influencers of sleep:

Element	How your child fits with this	How it impacts sleep
<b>Known Regressions: Is your child going through any known regressions?</b>		Going through a leap/regression often leads to regular wakings, sometimes down to every sleep cycle. Children who are learning to walk or crawl may start moving more in their sleep. Children who are learning to talk may speak in their sleep. Physical growth and teething can lead to more pain which leads to discomfort and sleep can seem more like that of a sick child.
<b>Safety: How does your child feel safe?</b>		Children who seem okay when their parents are apart from them tend to sleep better than those who are a bit more fearful. If your child doesn't like going down alone then you likely have one who needs you to feel safer.

**Health issues: Does your child have any known or suspected health issue?**

Health issues impact sleep in a variety of ways, depending on what the issue is, but almost all impact sleep negatively with greater night wakings and sometimes even more trouble falling asleep.

**Feeding issues: Does your child seem to struggle after or during feeds? Do you worry about supply? Is your older child a picky eater?**

Hungry children will wake frequently. A baby that is at the breast nonstop all night may be reflective of a feeding issue. Older children who are picky eaters may be hungry or this may indicate an undiagnosed allergy or intolerance which can lead to gastrointestinal discomfort and disrupt sleep.

**Sensory sensitivity: Does your child seem to respond either poorly or with hyperexcitability to certain sensory situations? Think about lights, noises, lots of people, types of material, etc.**

Sensory sensitivities often make sleep quite hard because no matter what they are, they can lead to the brain being overstimulated and struggling to calm. Touch sensitivity can lead to discomfort with things like PJs or sleep sacks. Light sensitivity can mean the production of melatonin is reduced. Noise sensitivity can make a child wake more frequently due to various noises they hear.

**Focus level: Is your child more alert than similar-age peers? Does he/she seem to focus more on the world outside and take in more than you realize?**

High levels of focus can be linked to reduced sleep due to an inability to 'shut off' the brain to calm and relax. It also means more information for our younger kids to process and make sense of and this can be very difficult for them as they don't necessarily know how to integrate all this information.

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**"High needs": Does your child seem much more demanding than others? Does she/he get sick more frequently when in larger groups? Do you find your child getting stressed out easily? What about distress levels – is your child more easily and strongly distressed than same-age peers?**

**Stimulation level: How much time in nature does your child get? How much interaction with adults and other children? Does your child play with lots of toys that make noises and have bright lights? Does your child spend lots of time in places with artificial lights, crowds, or loud noises?**

The orchid or high-needs child often struggles with sleep. This is likely due to the fact that they experience stronger emotions than others, get stressed out more easily, and can struggle health-wise. They need more sensitive and responsive parenting than other kids and with it may sleep well, but will fight tooth-and-nail when they don't have the security they need.

Depending on some of the other variables, this factor will be more or less relevant. But regardless, children who spend lots of time outside in nature and have more human contact over toys and indoor environments tend to sleep better. Obviously if there are sensory issues, this will be magnified.

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Now that you have completed the chart and can see how *your* child interacts with these variables, can you update your sleep expectations below:

*Please keep these expectations in mind when thinking about your child's sleep. Remember: Our goal is not to put the burden of change on our children, but to understand where they are at and what we can do to help them and ourselves. Next week we will focus on the issue of self-care and how we manage realistic expectations with sensitive and responsive caregiving.*